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SELLING BROTHERHOOD LIKE SOAP:
INFLUENCING EVERYDAY DISPOSAL DECISIONS

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Sorting garbage during disposal is effortful for the individual and the household, but beneficial to society in the long run. This makes recycling a typical example of a social dilemma, and a prime target for social marketing interventions. Household disposal acts are relatively mindless routine behaviors embedded in daily housekeeping tasks of a well-managed household. Higher-order goals to support compliance with recycling guidelines are readily available for reflection, but so are justifications for defection. We argue that the current theoretical basis for social marketing in social dilemmas is not well suited for this class of prosocial behaviors. Social marketing may benefit from strategies that make values and higher order goals accessible as a basis for decision making without promoting further elaborative thought.

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Religious and ethical thinkers of all times have taught us that "being your brother's keeper" is the most honorable goal for any human being. We all know, however, that we often fail to act as our brother's keeper. Most of the Western societies' continuing social problems can be reduced to the dilemma facing every individual between choosing for one's own short term gain and the long term gain of society as a whole. Selfish goals have tended to dominate. Dietz and Stern (1995) have called the individualistic value orientation the "dominant social paradigm". Religious and ethical systems, and finally also the government has tried to influence our selfish behaviors to protect the common good. Rothschild (1979) defined "selling brotherhood" as one of the most important tasks for social marketers.

One threat to the common good is the household production of waste. In industrialized nations, the annual production per capita of household garbage ranges between approx. 400 kilograms in Europe (Bogaert and Van Ootegem 1997), and 800 kilograms in the US (Pelton, Strutton, Barnes, and True 1993), while spare incineration and landfill capacity is severely limited and under increased public scrutiny. The corresponding social marketing task is to reduce the societal problem of processing and storing the waste. Recycling reduces the strain on processing resources, but requires separation of garbage fractions at the source. Social marketers need to convince consumers to do the sorting themselves. Using paid labor would currently render recycling economically unfeasible.

Quoting Wiebe (1951), Rotschild (1979) argued that it is 'hard to sell brotherhood like soap'. He observed that behavior in many social dilemma situations is relatively thoughtless, while the dominant response tendency is to maximize one's own gains. In order to produce prosocial behavior the social marketer should try to make the consumer reconsider the social implications of his behavior, and convince him of the attractiveness of the prosocial option. This view permeates the literature on social marketing. For example, Andreasen (1995) wrote that social marketers are in the business of trying to influence high involvement consumer decisions. Prosocial

behavior, in his view, requires "active contemplation", which is hard to produce when consumers are not spontaneously inclined to do so.

We want to offer an alternative point of view. The alternative is based on the observation that for individual consumers recycling can be characterized as routine behavior. Recycling decisions occur several times each day, when a consumer throws something in the trash. These molecular choices are not necessarily driven by explicit consideration of goals or values of any kind. But when a consumer wants to reflect about justifications for his decision, several and conflicting values and goals are available for justification. Making people think about their choices, like social marketers propose, is likely to activate several of these value considerations and awaken a decisional conflict that may not be spontaneously experienced. Sometimes, therefore, social marketers may be better off not promoting elaborative thought. We will examine the implications of this alternative perspective, and discuss the research questions it raises. Nothing we have to say is particularly new. In fact, our recommendations and research propositions are rooted in existing insights on the nature of low-involvement decision making and judgment (Alba, Hutchinson and Lynch 1991; Clore 1992).

Characteristics of recycling behavior

Belgium installed mandatory recycling of major waste fractions in the early nineties. Local governments mandate the use of different waste bags or bins for glass, paper, plastics, metal, and organic waste. Control, however, is imperfect and not all garbage is sorted well. A recent field study in Flanders (Bogaert and van Ootegem 1997) found that on average 62% of recyclable waste is appropriately sorted. Below a certain purity threshold, it would cost too much to recycle the contents of a waste bag.

We will start with a brief overview of our own observations of household recycling behavior in the Flemish part of Belgium (Smeesters, Warlop, Vanden Abeele, and Ratneshwar 1999), based on focus-groups and individual depth interviews. The data are

qualitative, and relatively 'raw'. As a whole, however, they may suggest why the traditional social marketing paradigms do not necessarily work. We believe that these observations are characteristic of the current recycling environment in many industrialized countries and regions of the world, and can be generalized to a relative large class of "brotherhood" behaviors, including tipping the waitress, courteous driving, taking the bus instead of one's car, or giving a coin to the Kosovar beggar.

Recycling is procedurally simple. People are asked to sort recyclable waste in three or four categories; one additional category is for non-recyclable rest waste. Each fraction has its own plastic bag or container, made available by the local government at a price covering the waste processing cost of its contents. Though a number of garbage items constitute problems for some (e.g. not all plastic materials belong to the 'plastic' category; some belong to the rest waste category), overall it is fairly obvious what goes where.

Recycling is rarely a major consideration in one's life. Sorting different waste categories also means that people have to store a number of collection bins or bags in their house. For most people, this space issue is not a major consideration. Many people have a garden or garage where they would store garbage until it was collected anyway. Our qualitative data collection started in a rural part of the country. To find people who were experiencing real material constraints, we had to gradually move to disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods. Even there, most people seem to handle the recycling guidelines of the local government pretty well.

The recycling dilemma is not commonly experienced as a conflict. Most of our informants reported on a good organization for storing waste bags and sorting the waste fractions. We asked participants in a number of focus groups to draw the ground plan of their house to indicate where and how they store waste between curbside collections. We also asked them to describe how they go about collecting, separating and storing the garbage items. It was striking how routinized this behavior was. People seem to have

formed a sorting routine at a certain point in time. And once routinized, persistence of sorting and recycling activities does not require much conscious thought. An important consequence of this routinization is that people stop pondering over the costs and benefits of recycling. This also means that people do not face a dilemma every time they throw some waste item in a waste bag.

Reflection easily produces justifications for noncompliance. Spontaneous narratives about household garbage handling activities reveal surprisingly little reference to values or purposes. Respondents concentrate on *how* rather than *why* they recycle. When asked to reflect about reasons, however, justifications are easily produced for both compliance and noncompliance with the recycling guidelines, and related to basic values or motivations. Most informants reported a high degree of compliance, but no one had any difficulties to retrieving episodes of defection, which were justified by referring to situational constraints on the appropriate behavior or on witnessing successful defection by others.

A range of intrinsic motivations. The installation of a mandatory program did not seem to produce "burn-out" as described by economists and psychologists when extrinsic motivation replaces intrinsic motivation (Frey 1993). In fact, our observations indicated that the installation of the mandatory program enriches the set of intrinsic values that are applicable to the behavior. While most of the literature on values and recycling (e.g., Bagozzi and Dabholkar 1994; McCarty and Shrum 1994) emphasizes environmental values, we found that our informants referred to morality, fairness and social duty as more important drivers.

There is an obvious contradiction between the ease and routinization of the reported recycling behavior of our informants and the aggregate observation that so much of the garbage is inappropriately sorted. Government studies of recycling (e.g., Bogaert and van Ootegem 1997) suggest that the problem is not associated with specific groups of individuals. While there are individual differences, inappropriate sorting occurs in

virtually every household. Can existing consumer theories provide an explanation for this phenomenon?

Recycling as intentional and volitional behavior

The dominant theoretical frameworks in the research on recycling behavior have been Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and its successors. These theories model the cognitive structure of beliefs about behavioral consequences and their importance weights, which jointly determine the attitude towards a particular behavior. Consequences are incorporated at the level of abstraction most salient to the individual. Typically, they are conceptualized as fairly proximal to the behavior. The intention to perform this behavior is a function of the attitude and the social norms surrounding the behavior. The values underlying the behavior are incorporated as determinants of importance weights. A behavioral consequence that appeals to a higher value in one's life will receive a higher weight and have more impact on the attitude towards the act. The potential conflict between goals is left out of the discussion.

Counter to what many recycling researchers have assumed (e.g., Bagozzi and Dabholkar 1994), TRA does not assume that every single decision is necessarily based on thoughtful consideration of the consequences of the behavioral alternatives. Actual behavior may be based on retrieved attitudes that are stored in memory. It does assume, however, that the attitude has formed through thoughtful reasoning at some point prior to the act. Choices are made by comparing retrieved attitudes about the competing behavioral alternatives (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993, for an extensive discussion). These theories adhere to what Wilson, Lisle and Kraft (1990) have called the 'file drawer analogy' of behavior. Like in a file drawer, a person's values, attitudes, beliefs, and relevant knowledge about a target object or act are stored in a systematic fashion. The 'file' with all these potential decision inputs is opened when it is called for by a pending decision involving the target object or behavior. Its entire content is then available for use in the decision, and will be used in the decision. The contents of the file drawer may change over time, through learning and experience, but this learning

process is slow and gradual. Stored beliefs, attitudes, and values are accessed and combined on the basis of some implicit calculation about their weighted relevance to the target object or behavior; this calculation rule itself is assumed to be stable. Therefore, in the short term the consumer's recycling behavior is highly predictable from the contents of his 'file' only.

The only source of variability in behavior, according to these models, is when a consumer changes intentions: a nonrecycler decides to become a recycler, or vice versa. Intentions can only change if the consumers' beliefs are changed. These beliefs can be about the costs and benefits of behavior, about the norms of the social environments, or about one's own ability to perform the behavior. The model assumes that changing these beliefs is an all-or-nothing process. It is a volitional and voluntary act on the part of the consumer, who has to be convinced that his previous conviction was wrong. Once a consumer has adapted a belief, the changed belief will always be active and influence each subsequent recycling act, unless it is changed again by a new, successful, marketing effort.

Recycling research (see Pieters 1989; Hornik, Cherian, Madanksy, and Narayana 1995 for reviews) has adapted to the constraints imposed by this model. All hitherto published studies have investigated recycling at a fairly high level of abstraction. Criterion variables in most of the studies have been measures of intention, or self-reports of past behavior. Self-reported recycling behavior is a summary measure of a series of consecutive discarding decisions over a specified or unspecified stretch of time. Even the few studies that used observational measures (e.g., Pieters' (1989) garbology studies) could only observe the aggregate result of consumers' recycling decisions over the previous week or weeks, as reflected in the contents of garbage containers they put out for curbside collection.

Not surprisingly, the bulk of the research is about individual differences in motivation and knowledge, or about situational factors which can be assumed to remain constant

over the period implied by the level of aggregation of the dependent measures, such as the nature of the garbage collection policies (Folz 1991). More generally, Pieters (1989), Thøgersen (1994), and Hornik et al. (1995) have called attention to the role of ability-related and opportunity-related determinants of recycling behavior. Intentions to recycle may or may not translate into behavior, depending on the consumer's recycling knowledge and stable constraints imposed by the environment. TRA-based models have been fairly successful in predicting whether an individual, based on his beliefs, will report to be a recycler or not (e.g., Allen, Davis, and Soskin 1993; Goldenhar and O'Connell 1992-1993; Grunert 1996). The theory can not account well for intra-individual variation in behavior. Recyclers are assumed to be always recyclers; non-recyclers never have a reason to recycle. This view is consistent with the individual difference perspective in social marketing; interventions are geared towards changing cognitive structure, and have to take into account stable environmental constraints. The application of the Theory of Reasoned Action to the recycling problem illustrates how difficult the social marketing task can be. One is asking the social marketer to make 'recyclers' out of 'nonrecyclers', or to convert 'sinners' to 'the good faith'. This difficulty has inspired the statement that "brotherhood can not be sold like soap".

Recycling as a social dilemma

Most prosocial behaviors, including recycling, are not all-or-nothing phenomena. The prosocial option competes at all times with other concerns, or may not even be salient in the mind of the consumer. From this perspective, the goal is to minimize the number of selfish choices, while realizing that most individuals will defect some of the time, due to situational factors, that may vary over time. The decisional conflict can also be characterized as a social dilemma or commons dilemma, because the needs and desires of the individual (self-interest) conflict with the needs and desires of human beings in general (collective interest). The essential property of a social 'commons' dilemma is that every individual continues to do something which yields an individual advantage, but is damaging the collective (Hardin 1968; Komorita and Parks 1994). Recycling is a good example of such a dilemma. By participating in a recycling program, members of

a community are making a contribution to the public good. If every individual contributes by sorting his domestic garbage in an accurate way, the whole community will benefit. However, in the short run 'not sorting' is the most profitable behavior for most people. It saves them discomfort, costs and time.

Social dilemma research introduces a dilemma as a molecular choice, which only after accumulation may result in negative consequences for the group. It also allows for situational determinants of these molecular decisions, which can vary within individuals over time. Most social dilemma research uses experimental games, such as the Prisoner's Dilemma game or one of several resource dilemma games, in which subjects take resources from a common pool and try to maintain it over a series of trials. Each player's task is to use the pool efficiently while trying to do well individually. In experimental games, the pay-off matrix of alternative courses of action is usually very salient. Participants are uncertain about the outcome, but they know all possible consequences of their cooperative and noncooperative choices. The major situational influences on behavior are due to the interdependent relationship of each participant with the other players in the game. Behavior in such games has been shown to depend on the anticipation and perception of the strategies of other players (see Komorita and Parks 1994 for an extensive recent review of this whole literature).

These findings are easily applicable to behavior in small group dilemmas (e.g., negotiation behavior, DeDreu and Boles 1998). Only a few studies (e.g. Cialdini, Kallgren and Reno 1990; Van Vugt, Meertens and Van Lange 1995) have focused on large scale social dilemmas. These are more problematic because they imply a large number of social actors, and a much longer time perspective, making it very unclear what the social consequences of one's personal decisions may be (Kelley and Thibaut 1978; Pruitt and Kimmel 1977). For example, in a metropolitan area several millions of actors make daily discarding decisions, affecting the lives of many more millions belonging to current and future generations. Each individual decision has a minimal impact on the collective outcome. Individual consumers can not know whether sufficient others would be willing to participate, and they are uncertain about whether

the collective outcome will ever materialize (Wiener and Doescher 1994). As a result, they feel less personally responsible. They easily attribute the responsibility for a clean environment to other 'players' like 'industry' or the government (Pieters et al. 1998), or assume that future generations will find the technology to solve the problems (Stern 1992).

Wiener and Doescher (1991) proposed several social marketing strategies to overcome these barriers. Social marketers should convince consumers that the collective goal is worth pursuing, and will be achieved with high probability. They should also try to enhance individual consumers' identification with the collective and emphasize the importance of the individual's contribution. These are all changes in beliefs or cognitive structure, which are hard to obtain.

It should therefore not be surprising that, just like in TRA-based recycling research, research efforts have been concentrated on individual differences that help to explain differences in cooperation. While the social marketing research is looking to identify segments which will respond positively to social marketing action, the emphasis in social dilemma research was initially more theoretical. Messick and McClintock (1968) identified three social value orientations, namely cooperation, individualism, and competition. Cooperators prefer to maximize own and others' outcomes, individualists tend to maximize own outcomes without reference to other's gain, and competitors prefer to maximize the relative advantage of self over others. Cooperators are typically the largest group, and the two others are often collapsed in one, contrasting, 'pro-self' group. Social value orientation is a relatively stable individual difference variable, rooted in socialization processes starting in early childhood (Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, and Joireman 1997). Previous research has shown that people with cooperative social value orientations (pro-socials) cooperate more frequently in experimental game situations than individuals with individualistic or competitive social value orientations (pro-selves) (e.g., Allison and Messick 1990). Prosocials are also more likely to help people in need (McClintock and Allison 1989), strive to maximize joint outcomes in negotiations (De Dreu and Boles, 1998), and are more willing to sacrifice in close relationships (Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, and Steemers 1997).

They would also prefer to commute by public transportation if other commuters do the same, while proselves prefer public transport only if other people travel by car (Van Vugt et al. 1995). Another important observation in these studies is that prosocials are very sensitive to the perceived behavior of others. Prosocials are willing to cooperate only when the other players are also willing to cooperate. Otherwise, even prosocials might turn to a more defective kind of behavior or tit-for-tat strategies (McClintock and Liebrand 1988).

Summary of current approaches

We have identified two psychological accounts for recycling (and other prosocial) behavior. The Theory of Reasoned Action and (large scale) social dilemma theory can both be used as a basis for designing social marketing interventions. In both cases the proposed interventions need thoughtful consideration and changes in beliefs or attitudes. Because these are so difficult to achieve, both look primarily for individual difference variables as explanations for behavior. Their 'all-or-nothing' position is hard to square with the high levels of participation but low intra-personal consistency we have observed in our own qualitative work.

Just like many other prosocial behaviors, recycling consists of a series of molecular recycling acts, embedded in an ongoing stream of household behaviors. Our observations suggest that the molecular acts are rarely very thoughtful. They are the result of a very simple decision by an individual at a particular time to throw the empty bottle or the read newspaper in the appropriate recyclable waste bin or not. On the other hand, prosocial behavior, such as recycling, assumes and requires that the consumer perceives the behavior (decision situation) as consistent with prosocial goals. How then can these simple and non-involving behaviors be linked with the "appropriate" social goals?

Linking means and ends

It is generally accepted that consumer behavior is goal-directed, and that goals at different levels of abstraction are hierarchically related. In consumer research, means-

end chain models have proposed a structural link between values and higher order goals, immediate concerns, and actual behaviors or preferences (Gutman 1982; Huffman, Ratneshwar and Mick this volume). Means-end chains can be considered as schemata or knowledge structures that may or may not be used to interpret a current situation (Walker and Olson 1991). Throwing the empty bottle in the glass recyclables bin may be construed as socially responsible or environmentally friendly, through the perceived social consequences of choosing for recycling or non recycling. The alternative, throwing the bottle with the nonrecyclable waste, may be construed as smart and time-efficient, because "nobody would find out anyway, and it saves me a trip to the neighborhood glass collector". When both types of values are active, the decision maker experiences the social dilemma as a personal conflict. This does not have to happen. In some cases, only one value or corresponding means-end chain might be salient to the decision maker, or none at all. In those cases, there is no conflict, but there may also be no prosocial action.

Huffman et al. (this volume) have proposed two different, but not necessarily mutually exclusive processes by which molecular behaviors are linked with higher order values. One process, they have labeled "goal alignment". Here it is assumed that consumers are motivated to achieve consistency among the different goal concepts they carry at different levels, and their actual behaviors. Goal alignment is achieved by extensive problem solving based on top-down processes (finding behavioral options consistent with one's goals) and bottom-up processes (finding goal constructs that are consistent with behavioral alternatives that one is considering). The other process is one of adaptation. The consumer constructs a motivation or purpose for his behavior by considering the constraints imposed by the environment. Goal alignment is a thoughtful and resource consuming process. For some brotherly behaviors a lot of thought may be necessary, such as when a potential choice for prosocial behavior carries a lot of personal risk. Huffman et al. (this volume) suggest that goal alignment processes will occur for high involvement decisions, such as when a consumer believes he will be held accountable for his choices. In other circumstances, goals are

constructed by adaptation to the environment (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998; Huffman et al. this volume). The optimal course of behavior and the motivation to justify it are jointly constructed on the basis of the choice set, or salient constraints (e.g., time pressure) on the decision. The proposed constructive heuristics are still resource-consuming and require considerable issue relevant thought.

The drawbacks of issue-relevant thought.

For social marketers, forcing the problem solving processes that are assumed in the goal determination framework upon consumers is not likely to be effective for the recycling behavior that we consider in this paper. Recycling is one activity in a continuous stream of household tasks, many of which require considerable planning, problem solving and social interaction. The individual mental capacity for such mental control tasks is limited. For example, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven and Tice (1998) recently demonstrated that performance in mental control tasks seriously deteriorates when the mental load imposed by a preceding self-control task (e.g., not eating from a plate of cookies) is high. In other words, consumers may have limited mental capacity for virtue. We argue that promoting consideration of prosocial values may even be counterproductive. Making consumers think about why they should recycle, will also make more salient why they should not. When consumers think about courses of action in a commons dilemma, private costs of the prosocial choice option and private benefits of the more selfish alternative are more a priori salient than the public costs and benefits of each behavior (Antonides and Van Raaij 1998). Concrete public benefits of recycling or the public costs of not recycling are fairly abstract, and further removed from one's daily considerations. In a heuristic decision process, based on the available problem representation, they may not even come to mind at all, or will be out-weighted by more proximal and salient personal consequences.

If social marketers would succeed in starting a more involving goal determination process, one should take into account that there is no reason why constructive thought should be selective. An individual, who is trying to construct or retrieve reasons to

recycle or act brotherly, will also retrieve or be able to construct reasons why he should not. Consideration may make the prosocial consequences of one option more salient, but it will also make the costs of the prosocial behavior for the self more salient. Similarly, it will make more salient that one's own contribution to the public good is extremely limited, and would not make much of a difference. Consideration may also promote speculation about what others will do or should do (Pieters et al. 1998), or render observed defective behaviors of others more salient (Smeesters et al. 1999).

Some writers have suggested an additional way in which purposive consumer behavior may be influenced, especially when the behavior is relatively thoughtless, as in the case we are examining. Huffman et al. (this volume; see also Walker and Olson 1991) have suggested that goals may influence behavior by merely making these goals more accessible in the mind of the decision maker. This idea (not further elaborated in their work) is consistent with a body of research in social cognition and low-involvement consumer decision making. We will examine the implications of this possibility in the remainder of this paper.

Extremely simple prosocial decisions

Alba, Hutchinson, and Lynch (1991) characterized many consumer choices as extremely simple, incorporating only minimal informational inputs, and only those that tend to be salient and are perceived to be relevant at the time of the decision. Their "accessibility-diagnosticity" framework suggests that consumer choices are often based on minimal inputs as long as these inputs are more accessible and more diagnostic (relevant for the decision and discriminating among alternatives) than their alternatives (Alba et al. 1991). Social dilemmas of the less involving kind, we argue, are not different. The decision to throw an item of garbage in the "prosocial garbage bin" or in the "selfish garbage bin" may be based on the first discriminating thought that comes to mind. If this reasoning applies to social dilemmas as well as to consumer decision making, the best option for social marketers may be to make prosocial values accessible in the mind of the consumer at the moment of discarding, while avoiding further

thought and consideration (which would make alternative and more selfish considerations more salient).

Some writers in social cognition go one step further, by suggesting that mere accessibility of decisional inputs may be interpreted as relevance. In the field of organizational theory, Cohen, March and Olson (1972) had proposed a 'garbage can model' of decision making (pun not intended). They argued that in organizations momentarily available information will be considered important and will drive decisions, resulting in a marked lack of consistency over time. Clore (1992) claimed that this model applies equally well to individual decision making. The model assumes that decision making is like the 'art of found objects' (Clore 1992): the decision maker makes the best possible use of whatever is at hand. People want their judgments and choices to be justifiable, but the acceptable justifications may be heavily dependent on what is cognitively salient at any particular time.

Recycling values, beliefs, attitudes and intentions to recycle not only have to be traded off against competing concerns in housekeeping tasks; they may not even come to mind at all. Whether or not they are used in any discarding/recycling decision will depend to a large extent on whether they are accessible for the behavior at the time of the decision. Communication policies to facilitate recycling behavior should be evaluated on the basis of their ability to bring relevant thought to the consumer's mind, while s/he is engaging in the specific household tasks that involve the discarding of garbage. No empirical research to date has investigated these issues.

Increasing the activation level of prosocial values for recycling decisions

Social psychologists (e.g., Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz 1978) have long demonstrated that behavior in complex social situations may be mindless and under the control of environmental cues. The mechanism by which the environment may control decisions and behavior is the formation of direct mental links between representations of motives and values in memory and the behaviors associated with them. The motive-goal-plan

structure becomes activated whenever the relevant triggering situational features are present in the environment (Barsalou 1991). Similarly, consumer researchers have argued that in familiar decision contexts, the activation of a goal or value may make the products or behaviors directly accessible as solutions to the problem (Walker and Olson 1990; Warlop and Ratneshwar 1993). This formulation supposes that goals and intents are represented in the mind in the same fashion as social constructs, stereotypes and schemas. Higgins (1997) referred to mental representations of goal values as "guides", and to mental representations of the behaviors to reach those goals as "procedures". For both types of representations, the probability of activation is a joint function of their applicability to the situation and their accessibility in memory (Higgins 1997).

The choice between actual prosocial end selfish behaviors is ambiguous. Both choice options have costs and benefits, positive and negative aspects. Behavior may be strongly dependent on how the choice options are interpreted. Several authors have suggested that these interpretations may be 'primed' by the environment (Cialdini et al. 1990; Herr 1986; Hertel and Fiedler 1998; Sattler and Kerr 1991). Priming refers to the incidental activation of knowledge structures, by the current situational context. Many studies have shown that the recent use of a trait construct, a social stereotype, or an action schema, even in an earlier unrelated situation, carries over to exert an unintended passive influence on the interpretation of a social situation (see e.g., Higgins 1997, for a recent review). In ambiguous situations, a priori open to multiple interpretations, Higgins (1997) has suggested that primes serve as disambiguators. Priming will influence which of two applicable alternative knowledge structures will be used to interpret the decision situation, resulting in prime consistent behavior. Bargh (1990) has argued that a motive or goal consistently activated in a general type of situation may become activated by the general features of that situation. 'Habitual' recyclers' motives may therefore be triggered each time they are confronted with the situational features of a typical discarding decision. They may cease to experience discarding as a decision, because the alternative courses of action would never come to mind. In Bargh's (1990)

words, motives start to function as "auto-motives", guiding behavior without requiring intervening conscious deliberation.

When the "choice nature" of a behavioral choice is not salient, several authors have shown that action schema's can be directly activated by contextual 'primes'. Bargh, Burrows, and Chen (1996) primed participants in a study with either an elderly or a youthful stereotype, and observed marked differences in the speed with which the participants crossed a hallway after leaving the experimenter room. 'Primable' action schemata can consist of relatively complex procedural knowledge. Dijksterhuis and Van Knippenberg (1998) found that priming subjects with a "professor" stereotype increased performance in a Trivial Pursuit game, while priming with a "supermodel" stereotype reduced performance.

More common should be the case in which the consumer still faces a decision each time he has to discard an item. By definition, "decisions" require deliberation, although the process might be extremely simple. The decision task is ambiguous in the sense that multiple values or "guides' can be applied in its interpretation. The 'prosocial' option, in fact, has many different possible labels. It can be identified as the environmental choice, the morally just choice, the socially responsible choice, the civic choice, and so on. But it can also be labeled negatively, as the "dumb choice" if somebody uses more individualistic, cost-minimizing, motivations as a frame of reference. The environment may exert a considerable influence on the interpretation of the decision task, which in turn will make some behavioral decisions more likely than others.

Herr (1986) found that altering the accessibility of "hostile" categories influenced people's competitiveness in a Prisoner's Dilemma Game. He argued that influencing the relative accessibility of one's cognitive categories can alter the interpretation of other players' behavior and, consequently, influence one's own behavior. Sattler and Kerr (1991) have conceptualized social motives (e.g., a cooperative social motive, an individualistic social motive etc.) as a structured set of cognitions (i.e., a schema).

They primed social motive schemas by presenting prescriptive messages (messages with either a "moral" theme or with a "power" theme) in a context unrelated to the choice task. They found that a moral message activated the prosocial social motive schema and resulted in more prosocial behavior, but only under some circumstances (see below). Similarly, Cialdini et al. (1990) primed exiting library visitors by handing them a leaflet which featured a pro-environmental of unrelated message, and found that receivers of environmental messages were much less likely to toss it on the floor of the parking garage.

In social dilemmas, not only the semantic (cooperative vs. individualistic) meaning of a prime is important, but also its valence. Both cooperative and individualistic behavior can be framed positively or negatively. Hertel and Fiedler (1998) suggested that semantic priming activates the representation of a specific type of behavior, whereas affective priming activates an orientation to approach or to avoid that type of behavior. They found, for example, that prosocial behavior in a dilemma game was not only influenced by primes suggesting positive connotations of cooperation but also by primes suggesting negative connotations of competition.

Boundary conditions for the priming effect

Social marketing can be enriched by considering ways in which cooperative behavior in recycling decisions and in other dilemmas can be influenced. Priming effects can be due to simple situational cues that could be put in place by social marketers. In the Cialdini et al. (1990) study, the prime was a message on the leaflet that was at the same time the to be discarded item. Other priming studies have used involuntary overheard conversations by socii, or 'radio messages' as priming stimuli. Laboratory manipulations often use less mundane tasks, but they always are designed to present the priming message in a way that makes the content active without suggesting that its meaning is related to the central task.

A lot of research needs to be done, in order to develop a theory of "low involvement" behavior and social marketing intervention in social dilemmas, which can complement the well established work on high involvement prosocial behavior. If these ideas survive empirical scrutiny, they should result in guidelines for social marketers which are very similar to those for advertisers of fast moving consumer goods (Rossiter and Percy 1997). We suggest that laboratory consumer research using priming paradigms can be used to develop such theory. Initially, researchers should concentrate on documenting the effectiveness of priming, and its sensitivity to a number of boundary conditions. In the priming literature, boundary conditions are derived from the finding that priming only works when the to-be-primed mental structures are (1) available to the individual, (2) accessible for use, and (3) perceived as applicable to the behavioral context. Below, we discuss a number of such limiting findings as a start for further inquiry.

Construct availability

Providing subtle cues in the environment cannot create motivations that the person does not at all have. An important boundary condition to the priming effects is that the mental structure or script linking the behavior to the value is present in the person. Bargh, Chen and Burrows (1996) suggested that behavior can only be under control of the situation (prime) if the behavioral representation is already associated with the situation by the individual. In their experiments all the primed behaviors were likely part of the behavioral repertoire of the participants. One may affect someone's behavior by making certain existing motivations more readily accessible as a means to interpret the situation, but cannot give them a motivation that they do not already possess. One crucial element of the theory we are looking for should be the required level of specificity of the relationship between value and behavior. Social dilemma research suggests the use of very general social value orientations (Hertel and Fiedler 1998; Sattler and Kerr 1991). Van Lange, Otten et al. (1997) found that prosocial value orientations dominate for the largest group of individuals, and that they are an important aspect of socialization starting in early childhood. However, the more abstract the

primed values, the more extensive the chain of associations that needs to be activated in order to affect behavior. It is also possible, but has never been empirically examined, that effective prime stimuli activate more task- and person-specific social values. Our own qualitative research (Smeesters et al. 1999) suggests that qualitatively different value orientations dominate reflections about the "why of recycling" for different individuals. If primes are only effective if the primed values are task specific, segmented approaches would be called for, which makes the life of the social marketer much more difficult.

Base-line accessibility of primed constructs

Arguably, the most speculative part of our conceptualization is the assumed schematic link between values and value-consistent behaviors. Moreover, these associations should be strong enough to activate situation specific action plans, upon mere triggering by value consistent cues in the environment. The availability of these strong scripts is easily assumed in current work on social cognition. They are also abound in much current means-end chain work in marketing (Grunert and Grunert 1995). Cohen and Warlop (in press) have lamented the absence of good evidence and theory on precisely this aspect of means-end chain conceptualizations of human motivation. Good evidence exists for the effect of prosocial primes in abstract resource or prisoner's dilemma games (Herr 1986; Hertel and Fiedler 1998; Sattler and Kerr 1991). Whether the same results would be obtained in more specific pro-social contexts remains to be demonstrated.

Priming makes available interpretative constructs more accessible for use in an interpretation task. But these constructs or schemata may also be habitually more accessible for one individual versus another. Social cognition research has emphasized the interaction between chronic and situational sources of activation of cognitive schemata on overt responses. Individuals may differ not only in the availability of relevant schemata but also in the extent to which they are "chronically" active in their interpretations of the environment. Prior social cognition research has generally found

that chronicity and priming have additive or weak superadditive interaction effects. However, habitual modes of interpreting the environment tend to be favorable to the concept of self. It was found, for example, that chronic 'proselves' tend to interpret social dilemmas in terms of intelligence or good strategy (smart vs. dumb), whereas cooperators tend to interpret the same choice in moral terms (good vs. mean). It is possible therefore that 'proselves' reduce cooperation even more when they are primed with (dumb) cooperation content.

Relevance, applicability, and use of primed constructs

Easily accessible constructs are not always used as a means to interpret ambiguous events. Their use is conditional upon judged applicability to the situation at hand. Earlier, it was often assumed that priming effects are only obtained when subjects are not aware of the priming event. Awareness of the priming even would make salient that the source of accessibility of the prosocial construct is not internal but external. It is an empirical question whether this applies here. In a social marketing context, this would constitute a serious problem. It is possible to bring verbal references to prosocial values in the general environment, but very hard to exclude awareness of the source. However the studies finding such exclusion effects studied more simple and experientially isolated behaviors. Recycling is embedded in a complex sequence of household tasks and events, leaving little mental resources for further consideration. Several studies have shown that the crucial condition for behavioral assimilation to primes, is not the subject's unawareness of the prime, but his inability to allocate mental resources to the elaboration of its contents. For example, Martin, Seta and Crelia (1990) found assimilation to primes, even when subjects were aware of the prime, when they were either not motivated or due to distraction not able to elaborate on its implications.

Conclusion

Social marketing starts from a fairly pessimistic view of human nature. The motivational groundwork of marketing and economics does not include altruistic or cooperative motives. For example, prosocial or ethical objectives are absent from Maslow's hierarchy, from the Rokeach values (Rokeach 1973) or Kahle's (1988) List of Values. The motivated consumer is often assumed to be an egoist. Recent social dilemma research suggests that this is not true: prosocial values are strong and dominant, strongly embedded in human socialization, and able to influence a variety of behaviors in real-life and laboratory social dilemma's (Van Lange, Otten et al. 1997). Then why would it be so hard to 'sell' brotherhood? And why can it not be 'sold like soap'? Our analysis, incomplete as it may be, suggests that there are different kinds of brotherhood, each with their analogies in traditional consumer marketing.

First, some forms of brotherhood are definitely not like soap. Buying an electrical car to help prevent inner-city air pollution (Harms and Truffer 1998), or giving up control over the functioning of the household air-conditioning unit (Osterhuis 1997) are not inconsequential. They carry high personal and economic risk, and consumers are likely to weigh their options carefully before making a choice. Here, the current social marketing paradigm, in which consumers are advised to reconsider the consequences of their choices, is most directly applicable. The social marketing task, however, is formidable, because most attempts to make consumers reconsider their options will strengthen not only the socially desirable beliefs and attitudes, but also the currently dominant attitudes.

Second, in some cases selling brotherhood is like selling a new brand of soap to "other-brand loyals" (Rossiter and Percy 1997). If consumers have developed stable individualistic or egoistic routine behavior, social marketing faces an excessively difficult task as well. Hoch and Deighton (1989) summarized the strategic advice for managing consumer learning in this group as "just struggle". Motivational approaches may not work, because any attempt to make them reconsider their beliefs will activate and strengthen the current beliefs, and their day-to-day routine behavior is driven by chronic, - automatic – own-cost-minimizing goals. Possibly, the behavior of this group

can only be changed through structural changes in the dilemma pay-off structure, and prosocial pricing (Stroebe and Frey 1983). Current recycling programs change the pay-off structure by charging much higher prices for rest waste recipients than for recyclable waste recipients. If control and penalization are believable, all consumers should participate regardless of motivation.

For most consumers, recycling behavior is characterized by the absence of goal references of any kind. For this third group recycling is like the purchase of soap by an uncommitted consumer. Different brands of soap can be associated with different consequences and values, like hygiene and health or with bodily scent and social success. A brand may be positioned as a 'means' to reach these values ends, and these means-end chains may be well established in a consumer's mind. Similarly, the different behavioral alternatives involved in discarding waste can be linked with a number of more abstract consequences and values. Recycling may be associated with environmental values but also with values of social duty or morality. Not recycling may be considered smart (beating the system) or frugal. Every individual has experience with both alternatives, and the links of associations may be as well established as the 'means-ends' positioning of any consumer product.

Thought is only useful if new and relevant information is given. Even then it still has to succeed in changing the experienced pay-off matrix or the attitudinal implications of the current cognitive structure. This insight has never escaped our religious and ethical thinkers either. Violations of ethical rules are rarely premeditated. They are due to inattention, negligence and thoughtlessness. Thinking too much about what one is supposed to do may will only awaken the realization that unethical alternatives are often easier and will go unnoticed. Ethical imperatives are supported by 'ten commandments', by simple stories and parables, or by simplified life histories of remarkable people. All these are easily accessible as guides for brotherhood. Just like religions, social marketers may be better off by just 'priming brotherhood'.

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